



[Joe Slovo, 1926 - 1995](#)

## SA Working Class and the NDR

The previous week's part of this 10-part series on the National Democratic Revolution was based around the ANC's Morogoro Strategy and Tactics document of 1969. We took our examination of the development of South Africa's NDR up to the beginning of 1976, when the document "[The Enemy Hidden Under the Same Colour](#)" was published following the treachery and the consequent expulsion from the ANC of the "Gang of Eight".

Later the same year the "Soweto uprising" of youth began, and spread all over the country.

Trade Unionism re-expanded from the early 1970s with strike waves in Durban and in the Witwatersrand where the watershed Carletonville Massacre took place on 11 September 1973. This year marks the forty-second anniversary of that event.

FOSATU, a syndicalist-led federation, was formed in 1979. It gave way to the National Democratic Revolutionary Alliance-aligned COSATU in 1985.

The United Democratic Front was launched in 1983.

All of these activities, amounting to the creation of living, democratic structures on a national scale, typify the National Democratic Revolution. They showed precisely how organisation into democratic structures formed the relentless collective Subject of History that then became impossible to resist.

Joe Slovo published “[The SA Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution](#)” (see the attached document, also linked below) in 1988 at a time when he was the General Secretary of the SACP. The Party was still clandestine, though it had begun to legitimise itself. The official end of its 40-year period of enforced illegality was to come two years later. Like many political documents, this one takes shape around a polemical response to contemporary opponents who may no longer be well remembered. In this case it was the particular “workerists” and compromisers of the time that Slovo mentions on the first page of the document.

But as with the polemics of Marx, Engels and Lenin, in the course of the argument against otherwise long-forgotten foes, Slovo was obliged to set up a fully concrete, rounded assessment of the meaning of the NDR, which still remains today as the best single and definitive text on this matter. He

succeeded brilliantly.

Slovo quickly establishes the class-alliance basis of the NDR and quotes Lenin saying that: *“the advanced class ... should fight with... energy and enthusiasm for the cause of the whole people, at the head of the whole people”*.

This advanced class is the working class.

Slovo goes on to write of the continuity of the NDR and of the institutional organising work that produces the bricks-and-mortar of nation-building.

Slovo’s incomparable document has many possibilities as the basis for a discussion, and that is always our purpose: dialogue.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The South African Working Class and the NDR, 1988, Slovo, extracts \(booklet\)](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).